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California Water Service Launches and Expands Sixth Annual Classroom Conservation Competition

K-12 students and teachers encouraged to engage in water conservation projects

SAN JOSE, Calif., Oct. 07, 2019 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- (NYSE: CWT) -- California Water Service (Cal Water), in partnership with the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) and DoGoodery, today announced the launch and expansion of the sixth annual Cal Water H₂O Challenge. The free, project-based competition invites fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade classrooms in Cal Water service areas to develop and implement solutions for water issues. To date, more than 250 classrooms have participated in the program. This year, DoGoodery will work alongside Cal Water to expand the elementary student competition to an umbrella program covering multiple tiers for K-12 student and teacher participation.

The revamped and expanded Cal Water H₂O Challenge will build on best practices gleaned from five successful years of the classroom-based competition to engage more people in caring for water at a range of levels. In addition to the continuation and expansion of the project-based challenge for grades 4-6 classrooms, the sixth annual Cal Water H₂O Challenge will include a K-12 student media competition focused on caring for water, a grants program for teacher-led water projects, new outreach options for teachers interested in water conservation, a water conservation pledge to reach individuals and families, and a new H₂O Challenge web series.

The classroom challenge will continue to ask students in grades 4-6 to identify a local or global water issue and work together to address their chosen issue through research and experiments over four to eight weeks. New opportunities from the program expansion will promote awareness of water issues and encourage civic engagement through the K-12 student media competition, provide additional funds and resources for teachers, and expand the reach and impact beyond classrooms to engage individuals, families, businesses, and others through the water pledge and web series.

“The Cal Water H₂O Challenge is an immersive experience for everyone involved; it gives students and educators the chance to view water conservation through a unique lens,” said Martin A. Kropelnicki, Cal Water President and CEO. “We’re pleased that, through this partnership with NAAEE and DoGoodery, we can continue to provide quality, service, and value to the communities we serve by engaging our future leaders—and often our best ambassadors—in the importance of water-use efficiency and other water supply issues.”

Judy Braus, NAAEE Executive Director, adds that the project incorporates Common Core

State Standards for English, Language Arts, and Math while complementing Next Generation Science Standards. “Participating educators and students are offered an interdisciplinary approach to enhancing students’ understanding of water-based science concepts in their community and the world,” Braus said. “Research has demonstrated that this sort of real-world, problem-solving approach is the most effective way we can reach students and develop the understanding and skills needed to address our most pressing issues.”

The winning classroom will receive \$3,500 and an all-expenses-paid camping trip to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area with NatureBridge. Runners-up receive grants and additional prizes for students and teachers. In October 2019, teachers of prize-winning classes from Years 1-5 of the Challenge will attend the NAAEE’s 48th Annual Conference in Lexington, Ky., for a winners’ summit and celebration.

Ms. Emily Akimoto and her fourth-grade students from Sierra View Elementary (Chico, Calif.) won the 2019 grand prize. In the wake of California’s most destructive fire in recorded history, Akimoto’s students felt a call-to-action to help devastated parts of their community and neighboring towns. “We realized this was our way to help. It was empowering for students, and also an outlet for healing,” Akimoto said. “This project has lasting implications. We stabilized a hillside that ran into a small tributary of Butte Creek. We made pamphlets to help those rebuilding think forward in their landscaping choices. While our target was to help the environment and the community, for me, the real target audience was my students. We learned to problem solve. We learned to work together. We learned how to be resilient. We set out to do something to help, and we feel like we did.”

In late 2019, Cal Water will also launch a teacher grant program, water pledge, and free individual challenge aimed at K-12 students living in a Cal Water service area. In the individual challenge, students can create and submit original art (along with a short statement) about caring for water, and prizes will be awarded to the winners. Winners and pledge participants will be highlighted on the Cal Water H₂O Challenge site.

For more information about the programs and eligibility requirements, visit challenge.calwater.com.

About Cal Water

California Water Service serves about 2 million people through 486,900 service connections in California. The utility has provided water service in the state since 1926. Additional information may be obtained online at www.calwater.com.

About NAAEE

For almost five decades, the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) has been dedicated to accelerating environmental literacy and civic engagement using the power of education. NAAEE supports a network of more than 20,000 educators and 56 regional affiliate organizations in North America, as well as partners in more than 30 countries. For more information, visit www.naaee.org.

About DoGoodery

DoGoodery is a social impact agency with storytelling at the heart of its mission. DoGoodery collaborates with partners through all phases of social impact strategy building and storytelling, delivering goodness to audiences and clients alike and amplifying stories of

change that empower, elevate, and excite. For more information visit www.dothegoodery.com.